

PSC To Recommend 34 Per Cent Allocation Of Parliamentary Seats For Sarawak, Sabah
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KUCHING, Dec 8 (Bernama) -- The Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on Electoral Reforms will recommend that the Election Commission (EC) maintains the 34 per cent allocation of parliamentary seats for Sabah and Sarawak in the next redelineation exercise.

This is among the recommendations made by the PSC following proposals coming from various quarters.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili, who chaired a two-day public hearing here from today, said the PSC was sympathetic to the views raised by three groups, namely the Sarawak Parti Keadilan Rakyat, Sarawak DAP and Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA).

"We will weigh the various comments and come up with the conclusions," he told reporters during a break at the hearing held at Wisma Bapa Malaysia in Petra Jaya.

He said the issue went back to history when the two states should hold at least one-third of the total parliamentary seats in accordance with the policy and spirit of the Malaysia Agreement.

In making the proposal, Sarawak PKR chief Baru Bian said the elected representatives and state government should ensure the agreement of their forefathers that accorded special rights to the two states, be adhered to so that Sarawak was not being under-represented at the federal level.

"I am not saying this because I am in the opposition," said Baru, who is also Ba'kelalan assemblyman, adding that the problem cropped up after Singapore left the federation, leaving all its 15 parliamentary seats to the peninsula.

In the redelineation process, however, he said, the EC should take into consideration geographical factors like vastness and distance as well as population density, number of voters and economic potential of a particular area.

Meanwhile, PSC member and Kapit Member of Parliament Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi agreed that the 34-66 per cent formula of power-sharing should be brought back by also looking at additional new rural boundaries to enable the voices of the rural people to be heard.

Asked if the redelineation exercise would be in time for the 13th General Election, Dr Ongkili said it was a matter for the EC to follow up.

"Both the government and opposition sides are neutral on this matter," he said.

He added that other proposals unique to Sarawak, included automatic voter registration, opportunities for people outside their polling stations to vote as advanced voters and making it mandatory for radio and television stations to give air time to both the Barisan

Nasional and opposition.

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